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CHALLENGERS OF THE UNKNOWN
APPROVED BY THE COMICS CODE AUTHORITY
LET'S GET OUT OF HERE-- BEFORE THOSE MONSTERS DESTROY US ALL!
BUCKLER & RUBINSTEIN

FOUR MEN LIVING ON *BORROWED TIME*, DARING THE STRANGE AND INEXPLICABLE, EXPLORING THE *BIZARRE*, BRAVING THE *HORRENDOUS*. FOUR MEN--

CHALLENGERS of the UNKNOWN

SEVEN DOORWAYS TO DESTINY!!

CHAPTER 1

SPECIAL GUEST-STAR: THE INIMITABLE

SWAMP THING

VERSES OF *VENGEANCE* AND *VICTORY* FROM THE PENS AND PENCILS OF --

GERRY CONWAY * WRITER
KEITH GIFFEN * PENCILLER
JOHN CELARDO * INKER
JERRY GERPE * CRAYOLA-WIELDER

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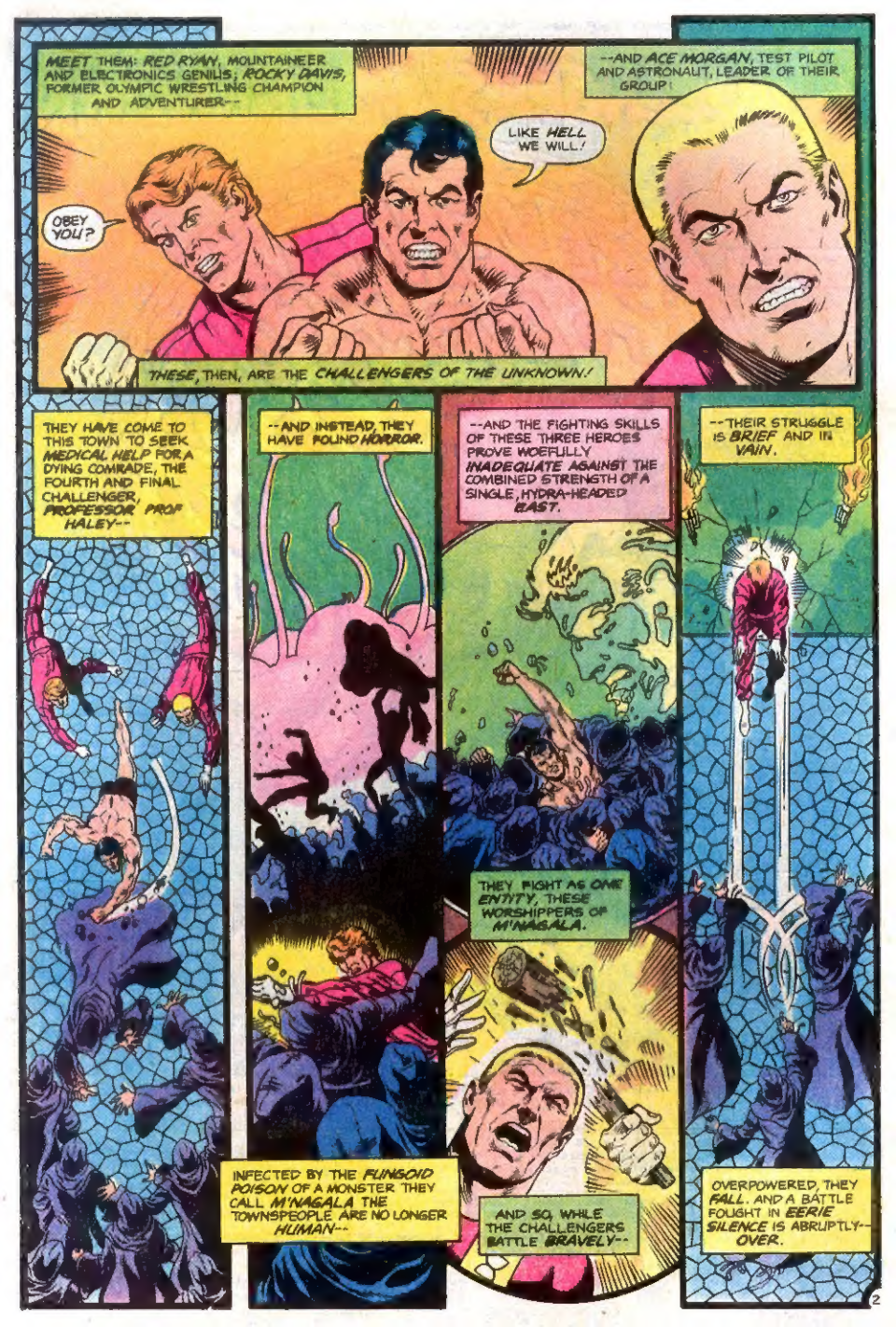
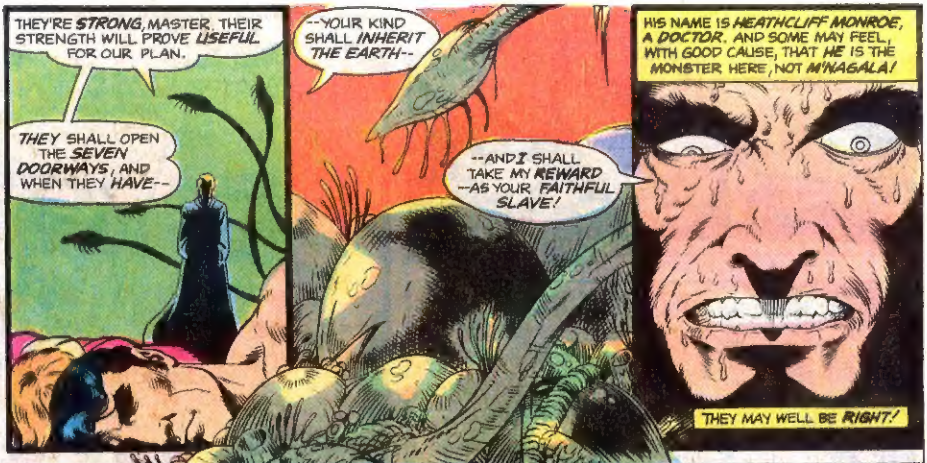
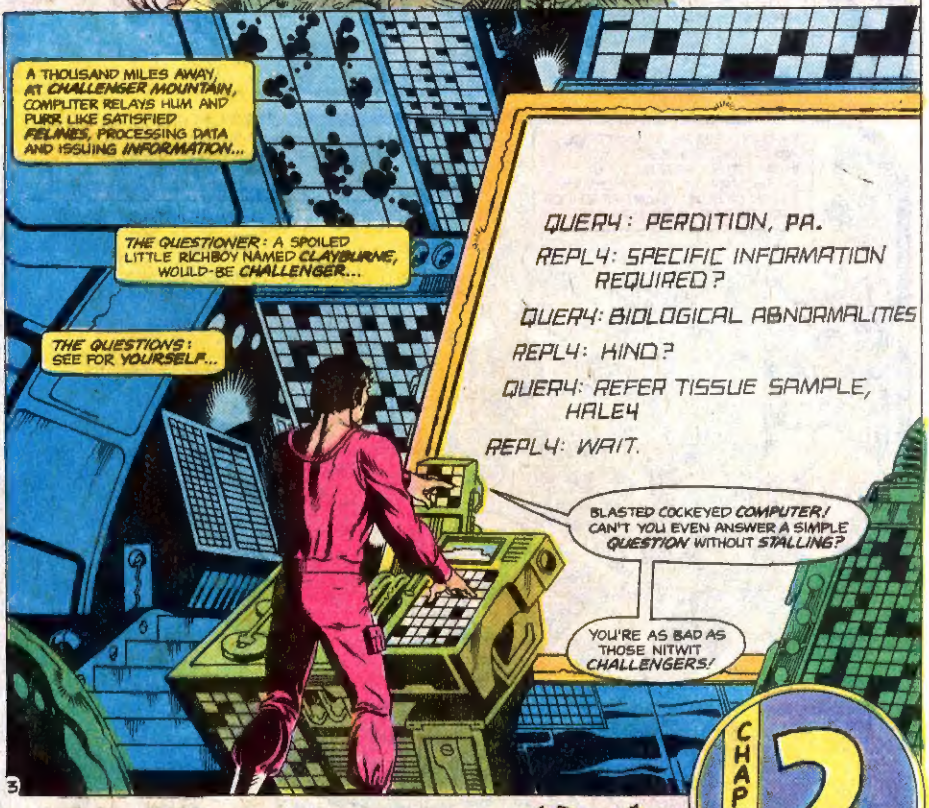
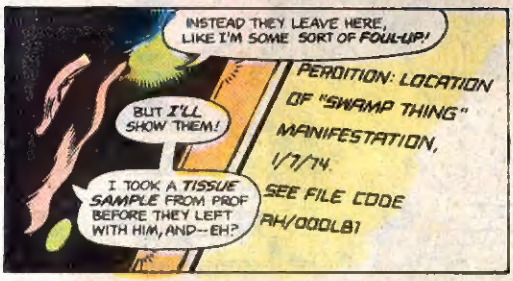

MEET THEM: RED RYAN, MOUNTAINEER AND ELECTRONICS GENIUS; ROCKY DAVIS, FORMER OLYMPIC WRESTLING CHAMPION AND ADVENTURER--
--AND ACE MORGAN, TEST PILOT AND ASTRONAUT, LEADER OF THEIR GROUP!
OBEY YOU!?
LIKE HELL WE WILL!
THESE, THEN, ARE THE CHALLENGERS OF THE UNKNOWN!
THEY HAVE COME TO THIS TOWN TO SEEK MEDICAL HELP FOR A DYING COMRADE, THE FOURTH AND FINAL CHALLENGER, PROFESSOR PROF HALEY--
--AND INSTEAD, THEY HAVE FOUND HORROR.
--AND THE FIGHTING SKILLS OF THESE THREE HEROES PROVE WOEFULLY INADEQUATE AGAINST THE COMBINED STRENGTH OF A SINGLE, HYDRA-HEADED BEAST.
--THEIR STRUGGLE IS BRIEF AND IN VAIN.
THEY FIGHT AS ONE ENTITY, THESE WORSHIPPERS OF M'NAGALA.
INFECTED BY THE FUNGOID POISON OF A MONSTER THEY CALL M'NAGALA THE TOWNSPEOPLE ARE NO LONGER HUMAN--
AND SO, WHILE THE CHALLENGERS BATTLE BRAVELY--
OVERPOWERED, THEY FALL. AND A BATTLE FOUGHT IN EERIE SILENCE IS ABRUPTLY-- OVER.

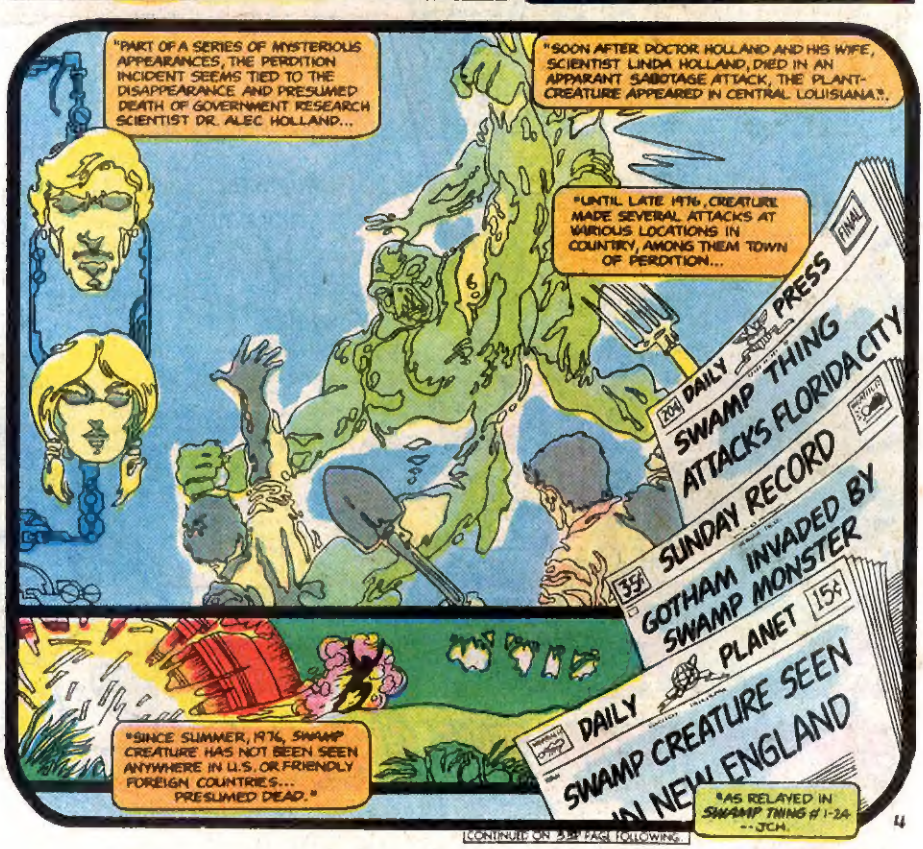




CHAPTER 2

SAVIOR FROM THE SWAMP?





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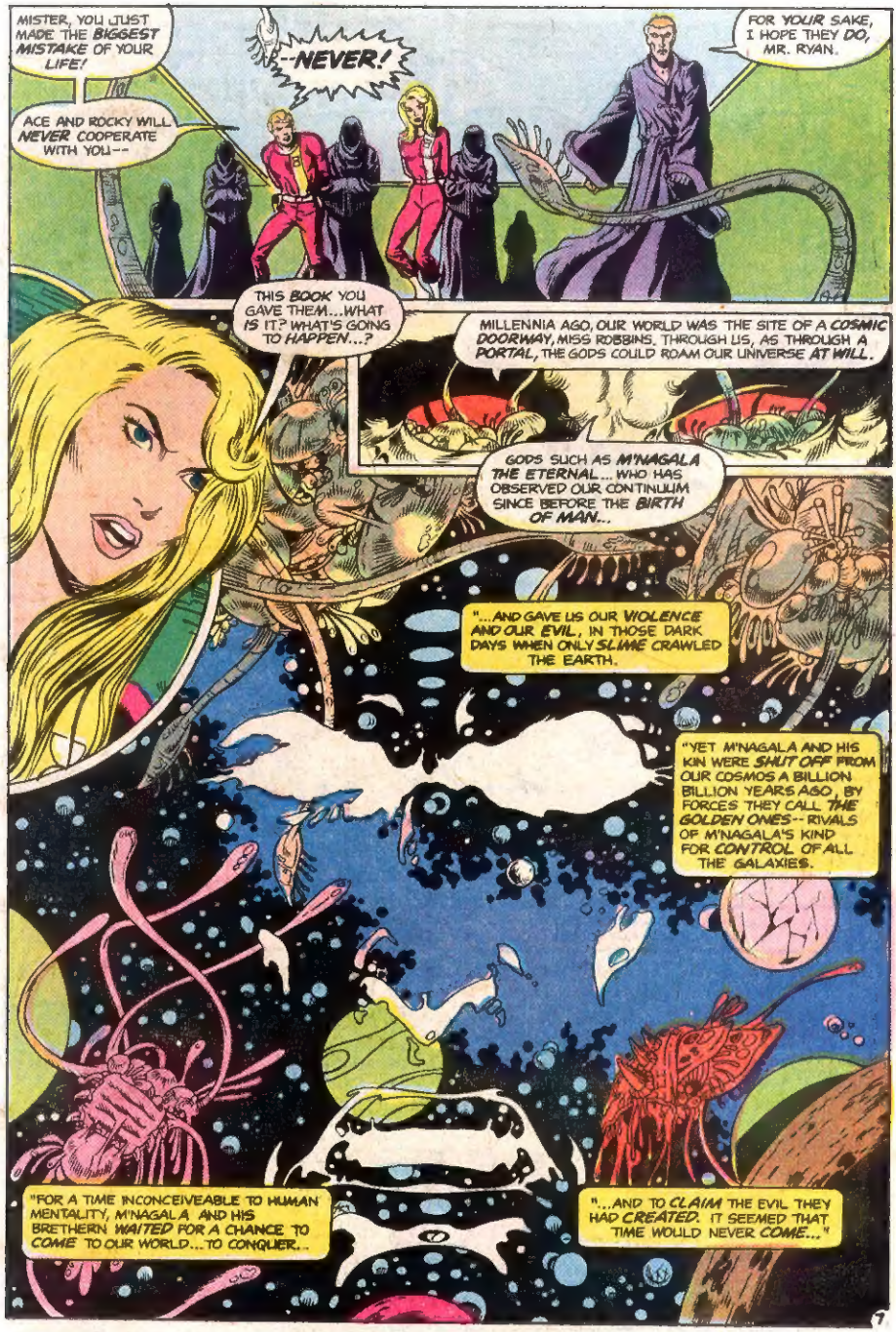
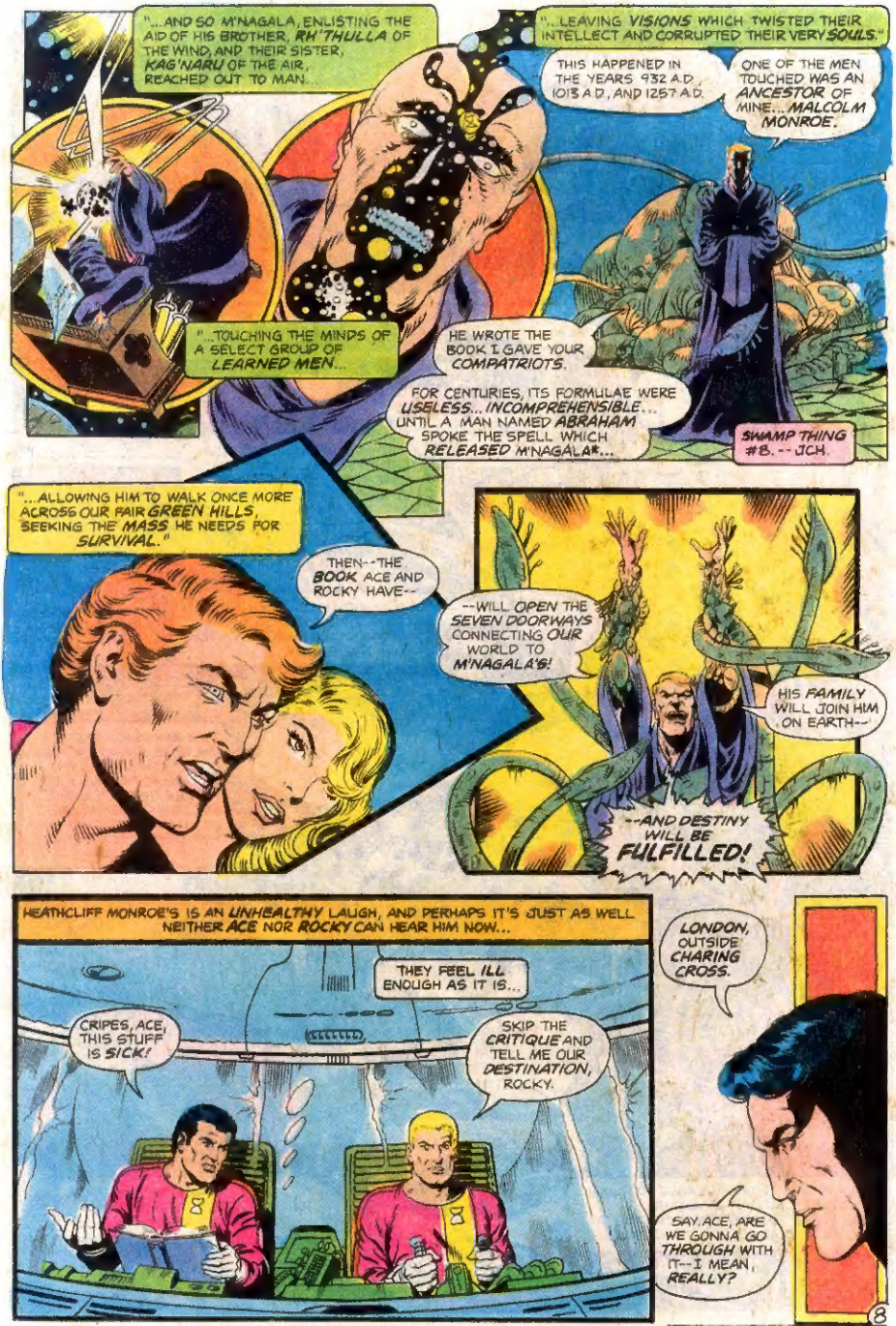
*SWAMP THING #1, AGAIN.--JCH

The GODS CRAWL CLOSER

CHAPTER 3


MISTER, YOU JUST MADE THE BIGGEST MISTAKE OF YOUR LIFE!
--NEVER!
FOR YOUR SAKE, I HOPE THEY DO, MR. RYAN.
ACE AND ROCKY WILL NEVER COOPERATE WITH YOU--
THIS BOOK YOU GAVE THEM...WHAT IS IT? WHAT'S GOING TO HAPPEN...?
MILLENNIA AGO, OUR WORLD WAS THE SITE OF A COSMIC DOORWAY, MISS ROBBINS. THROUGH US, AS THROUGH A PORTAL, THE GODS COULD ROAM OUR UNIVERSE AT WILL.
GODS SUCH AS M'NAGALA THE ETERNAL... WHO HAS OBSERVED OUR CONTINUUM SINCE BEFORE THE BIRTH OF MAN...
"...AND GAVE US OUR VIOLENCE AND OUR EVIL, IN THOSE DARK DAYS WHEN ONLY SLIME CRAWLED THE EARTH.
"YET M'NAGALA AND HIS KIN WERE SHUT OFF FROM OUR COSMOS A BILLION BILLION YEARS AGO, BY FORCES THEY CALL THE GOLDEN ONES-- RIVALS OF M'NAGALA'S KIND FOR CONTROL OF ALL THE GALAXIES.
"FOR A TIME INCONCEIVEABLE TO HUMAN MENTALITY, M'NAGALA AND HIS BRETHERN WAITED FOR A CHANCE TO COME TO OUR WORLD...TO CONQUER..
"...AND TO CLAIM THE EVIL THEY HAD CREATED. IT SEEMED THAT TIME WOULD NEVER COME..."



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WE HAVE A CHOICE?
BESIDES, WHAT'S THE PROBLEM? WE RECITE SOME MUMBO-JUMBO, LIGHT SOME CANDLES, BURN SOME INCENSE--
IT'S NOT LIKE SETTING OFF AN ATOM BOMB.
ACE, OL' BUDDY... I'M NOT SO SURE...
THIS STUFF THEY LEFT US SURE GIVES ME THE CREEPS.
I JUST HOPE WE KNOW WHAT WE'RE DOIN'.. 'CAUSE IF WE DON'T...
...WE'RE IN TROUBLE BIG!
AND, AS ONE CHALLENGER JET STREAKS EASTWARD TO THE ISLE OF BRITAIN, LOOPING HIGH THROUGH THE STRATOSPHERE AT TRANS-SUPERSONIC SPEED--
--ANOTHER JET, DESIGNED MUCH LIKE A NEW NASA SPACE SHUTTLE, DROPS FROM THE NIGHT SKY INTO A CLEARING OUTSIDE PERDITION!
FROM OREGON TO PENNSYLVANIA IN LESS THAN FIFTY MINUTES!
IF I HADN'T SEEN IT... I WOULDN'T HAVE BELIEVED IT, MISTER CLAYBURNE.
THE CHALLENGERS MAY BE ARROGANT SNOBS, DOCTOR HOLLAND--
--BUT SLOWPOKES THEY'RE NOT.
AND BEFORE I FORGET--
--THANKS FOR COMING ALONG.
I COULDN'T VERY WELL SAY NO, MR. CLAYBURNE... NOT AFTER YOU SHOWED ME THIS-- PROFESSOR HALEY'S TISSUE SAMPLE.
I'VE SEEN THIS FUNGUS BEFORE, WHEN I WAS IN PERDITION--*
*AS SWAMP THING, IN THE AFOREMENTIONED S.T. #8.-- JCH

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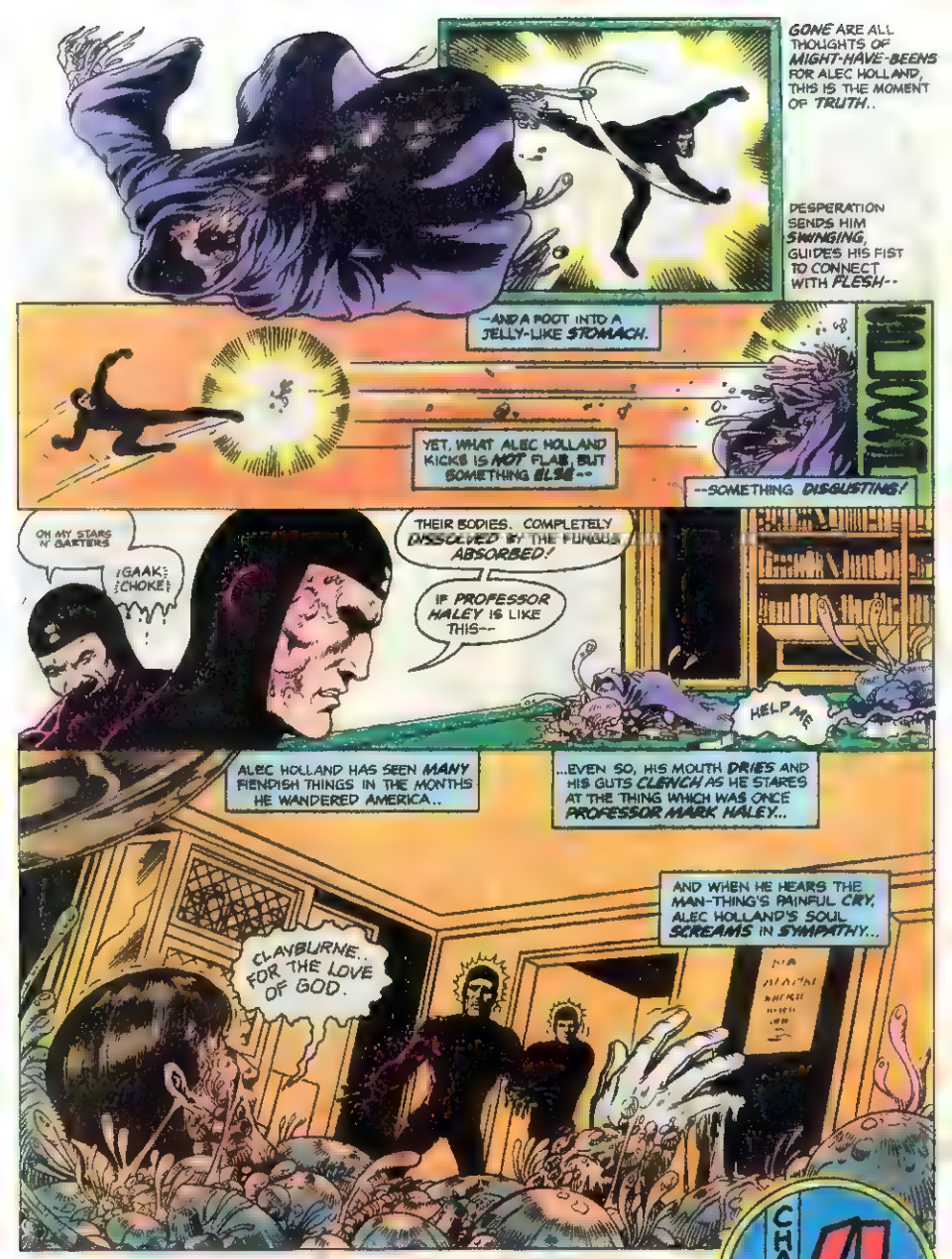
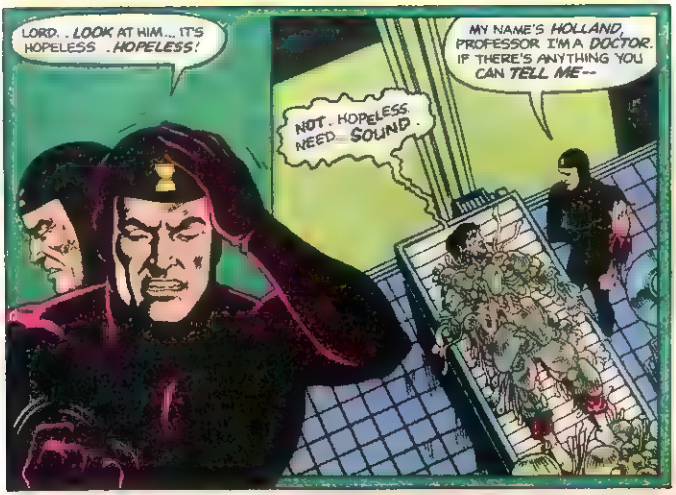
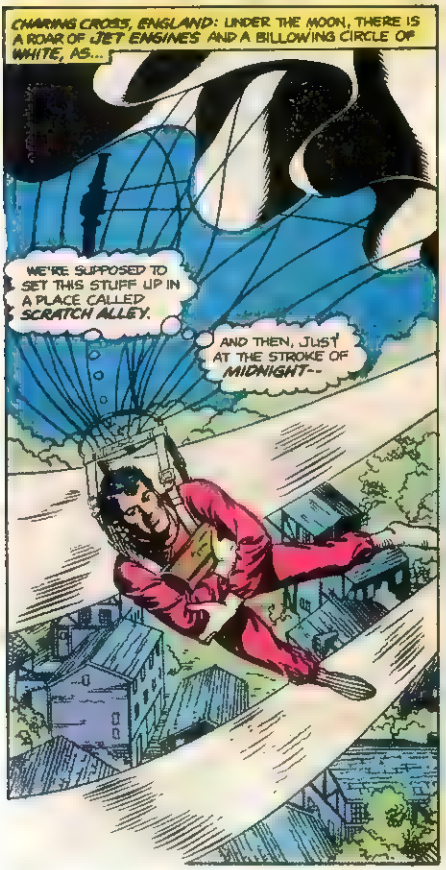


ALL MONSTERS GOOD and EVIL





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AND, AS ROCKY DAVIS BEGINS HIS PREPARATIONS...
I DIDN'T TELL ROCKY WHAT I'M PLANNING BECAUSE IF IT FAILS, I WANT IT ON MY CONSCIENCE--AND MINE ALONE!
IF THE THING WE SUMMON UP IS ANYTHING LIKE ITS PAL IN PERDITION, THIS MIGHT WORK--
--BUT IT'S A LONG SHOT
THE LONGEST SHOT I'VE EVER MADE!
IF I MAKE IT!
EMERGENCY FUEL POD
DANGER
DO NOT RE
I HATE THIS. I REALLY HATE THIS.
IT DOESN'T TAKE ROCKY DAVIS LONG TO COMPLETE THE ARRANGEMENTS, EVEN WITH TREMBLING HANDS, AND SO, LESS THAN TWENTY MINUTES LATER, AS A DISTANT CLOCK CHIMES TWELVE...
BONG BONG
SONS OF DARKNESS, BROTHERS OF THE NIGHT,
IN YOUR HALLOWED CAVERNS SEE OUR LIGHT--
ANSWER THE CALL OF THOSE WHO SEEK YOU--COME TO US NOW, PLEASE, WE PRAY YOU!
SEVEN BROTHERS AND SEVEN DOORS, SEVEN SISTERS AND ONE DOOR MORE!
DEAD THOUGH YOU MAY BE, HEAR US, WE PLEA--
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—COME TO US NOW, FULFILL YOUR DESTINY!
—AND IN THAT DARKENED ALLEYWAY, ONE DOOR OPENS:
AND THROUGH IT COMES A NIGHTMARE!
THERE IS WIND AND THERE IS COLD—
YAAAAHH!
SIMULTANEOUSLY, IN THE TWICE DAMNED TOWN OF PERDITION..
YOU'RE SURE— THIS EMERGENCY SIREN FROM THE JET—WILL BE ENOUGH?
IF IT ISN'T—WE WON'T HAVE—A SECOND CHANCE!
AND EVEN IF IT IS, MY SECOND CHANCE IS GONE FOREVER!
I'M CHANGING BACK INTO SWAMP THING! THE ANTIDOTE MY BROTHER GAVE ME WAS ONLY TEMPORARY... AND WITHOUT COMPLETING MY WORK ON THE BIO-RESTORATIVE FORMULA.. I'LL BE TRAPPED IN THIS MISSHAPEN BODY.. FOR THE REST OF MY LIFE!
CLAYBURNE AND PROF CAN'T SEE ME IN THIS LIGHT—
14

--AND THAT'S HOW I WANT IT!
LET THE WORLD REMEMBER ALEC HOLLAND AS A MAN--NOT A MONSTER!
HOLLAND! WHERE ARE YOU--?
FORGET HIM, CLAYBURNE...
THE SIREN... USE... IT! FOR HEAVEN'S SAKE...
USE IT!
FINGERS FUMBLING, CLAYBURNE DOES AS HE'S TOLD--
--AND SOUND PIERCES THE SILENCE LIKE A SINGING SWORD!
JUNE! LOOK AT THE TOWNSPEOPLE--THEY'RE GOING NUTS!
WHAT ON EARTH--?
IT'S THAT SIREN SOUND, RED! THEY CAN'T STAND THE SOUND--NONE OF THEM CAN!
REEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEE
MAYBE... NONE OF THE PEOPLE... BUT M'NAGALA ...CAN RESIST IT... AND IS!
THE SIREN ISN'T ENOUGH... BUT PERHAPS... WITH A LITTLE HELP...
...M'NAGALA CAN BE DESTROYED... AFTER ALL!
THIS IS ALEC HOLLAND, NO LONGER A MAN, NOT QUITE A MONSTER, CONDEMNED BY FORCES BEYOND HIS CONTROL--
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CONCLUDED ON 3rd PAGE FOLLOWING

BULL'S-EYE!
STRUCK, THE FUEL POD EXPLODES, ROCKING THE ALLEY WITH A SOUND LIKE THUNDER--
--AND BLASTING THE COSMIC INVADER FROM HERE--TO ETERNITY!
BOOM
WHEE-O! HOW'D YOU EVER THINK OF THAT?
HOW ELSE, ROCKY? I SAW IT IN "JAWS"!
HECK, IF IT'S GOOD ENOUGH FOR A GREAT WHITE SHARK--
MORGAN... SHUT UP!
EPILOGUE:
TWO HOURS LATER, AS THE FIRES DAMPEN IN PERDITION...
GOTTA HAND IT TO YOU, CLAYBURNE. FOR ONCE IN YOUR LIFE... YOU DID GOOD.
HOLD THE MEDALS TILL AFTER WE GET PROF TO A HOSPITAL. HE'S SINKING FAST.
BUT DOCTOR HOLLAND... YOU SAID HE WAS WITH YOU, CLAYBURNE...?
HE WAS... BUT HE DISAPPEARED. FROM THE LOOK OF HIM, I THINK THE FUNGUS WAS BEGINNING TO AFFECT HIM...
I THINK... HE MUST BE... DEAD.
YOU'RE RIGHT, CLAYBURNE... ALEC HOLLAND IS DEAD...
...BUT THE SWAMP THING LIVES ON...
...OH, LORD, HE LIVES ON...
AND FOR THE MUCK-ENCRUSTED MOCKERY OF A MAN, IT IS ANYTHING BUT... THE END!
17
NEXT ISSUE:
BECAUSE YOU ASKED FOR IT, THE STARTLING RETURN OF COMICS' MOST DEMANDED HERO--
DEADMAN
IN CHALLENGERS #84 ON SALE SEPT. 20TH

EDITOR'S NOTE: **I'm telling you, with doing the editing on quite a number of new and revived titles, I seem to be typing up more than my share of "Editor's Notes" explaining why we haven't comments on the first issue of a new or revived book when you're reading the fourth issue. So, this time I'm not going to explain it! Instead, we're going to jump right into the mail on the *CHALLENGERS* appearances in *SUPER-TEAM FAMILY*:**

Good Morning:

My ride to work having called in sick this morning, I find myself faced with the prospect of either taking the day off or hitching some 40-odd miles through the invigorating temperature of +10°. Obviously, being a man of stern character, I chose the more difficult of the two by remaining home and drafting this note of congratulations on your successful revival of the **Chalis**.

EDITORIAL INTERRUPTION: **Excuse me, James, but before I type up another one of these *CHALLENGER MOUNTAIN MAIL ROOM* pages, I want to get something editorially clear. For some unknown reason, I have had an aversion to the term *"Chalis"* ever since I first saw it. I always felt it tended to wipe away some of the nobility of the team. After all, *SHOWCASE* #11 (*CHALLENGERS OF THE UNKNOWN*) was the *VERY FIRST COMIC* this editor ever read (now it can be told!), so let's run by that last phrase again, shall we?—JCH**

. . . congratulations on your successful revival of **the Challengers.**

The intrepids of Challenger Mountain have always held a certain facination to me. Of all the teams that I remember from my early contact with comics (**Cave Carson, Rip Hunter, Sea Devils**), **the Challengers of the Unknown** were the sole group with superior character portrayal, individualy and collectively. And now, through the capable talents of Skeates, Sherman and Abel, they are once again presented in all their glory. I trust that Conway, Nasser and (?) will continue this tradition when they take the helm in **CHALLENGERS #81.** To be quite honest, I have my doubts. I consider Mike Nasser an excellent artist, but I somehow can't see his **GA/BC** style fitting **the Challengers.** It's just a little to (if you'll pardon the expression) "comic-booky". **The Challengers** need an artist that can relate Lovecraftian, Burroughsian and Merritian concepts back to their beginnings, but as acceptable extentions if a momentarily ungoverned "governed" reality. I cannot honestly say that I would have purchased **SUPER-TEAM FAMILY** #'s 8, 9 and 10 had Mike Nasser done the artwork.

As for Gerry Conway taking the scripting chores, I can only hope he writes like he did for Thor and not like he did on **JLA.** Gerry is better at writing lead character with back-ups like the Warriors Three than he is at developing equal billing for **team** members.

Do not misunderstand me, however. I am not waiting for #81 with a negative attitude. I am merely waiting. Good luck and have a good day.

James Planck
31 Falkill Ave.
Poughkeepsie, NY 12601

We sincerely hope your wait was worthwild, James (and we also hope you enjoyed your "day off" that cold day last winter). We feel Mike's work fits perfectly with *THE CHALLENGERS*, and Gerry's been concentrating on giving each *CHALLENGER* his own moment at doing what he does best. We're anxious to hear your feelings on the "Love-craftiness" of the last couple of *CHALLENGER* issues. And never set down on us for being "comic-booky." We're *PROUD* of our products and what they are! We're trying out different themes each issue and a few guest-stars will be popping up in the future—including one of the old favorites you mentioned!—JCH

. . . . .

Dear Editor,

What can I possibly say? Each issue of **SUPER-TEAM FAMILY** starring **the Challengers** has gotten better than the previous one, culminating in the masterpiece presented in **STF** #10.

. . . The friendly feud between **Red** and **Rocky** is something that was lost for awhile, but I'm really glad to see it back! And talk about characterization! **The Challengers** have really grown past the professional stereo-types they were in the beginning. In addition to an attraction to a certain honorary **Challenger** (which he seems to find hard to express), **Ace** has developed a mean streak of jealousy. Meanwhile, it seems **Prof** has come up with something just slightly more fatal. Hey guys, he just got back! Don't kill him off!

Gaylord Clayburne offers some much-needed inner-conflict. **Prof, Red, Ace** and **Rocky** all get along so well, and it's only natural after all they've been through together. But you still need that source of antagonism, or it would end up reading like a chapter out of a Bobbsey Twins book!

June Robbins? She has never looked better! The jealousy on **Ace's** part is understandable, but knowing **June** is as an independant individual, and the way she's being fought over by **Ace** and Gaylord, I should think she's bound to blow up in protest about being volleyed back and forth. It's just a manner of time . . .

The simplistic, old-style action and complicated subplots and personal developments have made **the Challengers** return more exciting that even I expected. I look forward to a lo-o-o-ong future for their revived book. Don't let me down.

Mike Christiansen
704 S. Third St.
Rockford, Ill. 61108

Looking back over all the issues of *CHALLENGERS OF THE UNKNOWN*, we found it to be one of the earliest comics that delved into the deep characterizations of the members of its "cast." Even though it began with just some friendly rivalry between *ROCKY* and *RED*, we, as readers, could easily determine which character was speaking by just reading the way they said it. They each had their own personality—even 'way back then. We know Gerry will be able to hold onto this factor in the series while adding some of the wonderment of the "modern comics style!" The best is yet to come!—JCH

. . . . .

Hey! Drop us a card or letter at: *CHALLENGER MOUNTAIN MAIL ROOM*, DC Comics, 75 Rockefeller Plaza, New York, NY 10019!